



[Lindsey German](#) in 2009

Patriarchy

In South Africa, by 2012, “Patriarchy” theory was orthodox. It is still politically correct, and government ministers and trade union leaders feel free to denounce patriarchy without fear of contradiction.

Patriarchy doctrine says that men have an innate prejudice against women that causes them to treat women badly. This contradicts the other principal orthodoxy related to women, which is Gender theory.

To say that men have an innate prejudice is to attribute to men a characteristic that is not biological. Hence, patriarchy doctrine is prejudice. It is gender bias. Patriarchy doctrine is sexism.

Lindsey German is a renowned leader of the peace movement in Britain. She is the convenor of the **Stop the**

War Coalition, an alliance that involves the Communist Party of Britain as well as Lindsey German's former organisation (she has now resigned from it), the Socialist Workers' Party.

Lindsey German rejected the theory of patriarchy more than 30 years ago.

The article attached and linked below is from 1981 but it is not out of date. It will not offend all supporters of patriarchy-theory, because, as German points out, there are many different definitions of the word. But it will upset some, if they read it.

German focuses on the kind of patriarchy-theory that holds that all men benefit from the oppression of all women, where this is taken as a natural, or given, state of affairs.

Lindsey German sets quotations from Karl Marx against these ideas to show that they are not compatible with history.

She shows how the modern conditions of women were not inevitable but arose in the circumstances of capitalism.

"I would argue therefore that not only do men not benefit from women's work in the family (rather the capitalist system as a whole benefits), but also that it is not true that men and capital are conspiring to stop women having access to economic production," says German.

“The question the theorists of patriarchy have to answer is this – if capital and men are indeed in alliance why are women not being thrown out of work and replaced by unemployed miners, steelworkers and dockers?” asks German.

German concludes: “Theories of patriarchy are not in fact theories of women’s liberation. Instead of starting with an assessment of the material position of women in capitalist society, they start with crude biological assessments of the positions of men and women. They point no way forward for women’s liberation.”

...and asks: “Why then have they become so popular?”

She points out that patriarchy-theory *“demands theoretical correctness from the few while accepting inaction by the many.”* This is exactly the situation in South Africa today, more than 30 years after German wrote her essay.

In the end, only the abolition of class division can do away with the oppression of, and discrimination against, women.

Those women who would rather not think about class, are the ones who make patriarchy-theory popular.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Theories of Patriarchy, Lindsey German, 1981.](#)
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